

This election is not about all the players that get written about in Washington. This election is about the American people. And they are perfectly happy to make the decision that is theirs every 4 years. And they will make it for themselves. And the candidates will be the major players; everybody else, to a greater or lesser degree, is in a subordinate role, as they always have been.

Press Secretary Joe Lockhart. Thank you, pool. Thank you.

Relationship With Republican Congress

Q. [Inaudible]—with the Republican leadership heading into this budget showdown?

The President. Well, you know, I have always had a very cordial relationship with Senator Lott and with Mr. Hastert since he's been there, the Speaker. And you know, even Mr. DeLay came up here the other day for this adoption event, and we had a good visit. I wouldn't—you know, I don't agree with them on the substance of a lot of this.

But I don't—I've said this a hundred times. Let me say it one more time. I have never, to the best of my knowledge, let political conflicts, even ones that had deeply personal overtones, get in the way of working with people who were also sent here. They were sent here, just like I was, by the American people.

And this is not an emotional issue. This is a job. We've got a job to do for the American people. We were hired to do it, and we need to do it. And so I feel good about it. And I hope that they'll come down here, and I hope we can work together and work something out. I'll do my best.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:15 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House following a meeting with the economic team. In his remarks, he referred to Pakistani Gen. Pervez Musharraf, army chief of staff, who led a coup d'etat in Pakistan on October 12. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval Foreign Operations Appropriations Legislation October 18, 1999

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 2606, the "Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2000."

The central lesson we have learned in this century is that we cannot protect American interests at home without active engagement abroad. Common sense tells us, and hard experience has confirmed, that we must lead in the world, working with other nations to defuse crises, repel dangers, promote more open economic and political systems, and strengthen the rule of law. These have been the guiding principles of American foreign policy for generations. They have served the American people well, and greatly helped to advance the cause of peace and freedom around the world.

This bill rejects all of those principles. It puts at risk America's 50-year tradition of leadership for a safer, more prosperous and democratic world. It is an abandonment of hope in our

Nation's capacity to shape that kind of world. It implies that we are too small and insecure to meet our share of international responsibilities, too shortsighted to see that doing so is in our national interest. It is another sign of a new isolationism that would have America bury its head in the sand at the height of our power and prosperity.

In the short term, H.R. 2606 fails to address critical national security needs. It suggests we can afford to underfund our efforts to keep deadly weapons from falling into dangerous hands and walk away without peril from our essential work toward peace in places of conflict. Just as seriously, it fails to address America's long-term interests. It reduces assistance to nations struggling to build democratic societies and open markets and backs away from our commitment to help people trapped in poverty to stand on their feet. This, too, threatens our security because future threats will come from regions and nations where instability and misery prevail

and future opportunities will come from nations on the road to freedom and growth.

By denying America a decent investment in diplomacy, this bill suggests we should meet threats to our security with our military might alone. That is a dangerous proposition. For if we underfund our diplomacy, we will end up overusing our military. Problems we might have been able to resolve peacefully will turn into crises we can only resolve at a cost of life and treasure. Shortchanging our arsenal of peace is as risky as shortchanging our arsenal of war.

The overall funding provided by H.R. 2606 is inadequate. It is about half the amount available in real terms to President Reagan in 1985, and it is 14 percent below the level that I requested. I proposed to fund this higher level within the budget limits and without spending any of the Social Security surplus. The specific shortfalls in the current bill are numerous and unacceptable.

For example, it is shocking that the Congress has failed to fulfill our obligations to Israel and its neighbors as they take risks and make difficult decisions to advance the Middle East peace process. My Administration, like all its predecessors, has fought hard to promote peace in the Middle East. This bill would provide neither the \$800 million requested this year as a supplemental appropriation nor the \$500 million requested in FY 2000 funding to support the Wye River Agreement. Just when Prime Minister Barak has helped give the peace process a jump start, this sends the worst possible message to Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinians about America's commitment to the peace process. We should instead seize this opportunity to support them.

Additional resources are required to respond to the costs of building peace in Kosovo and the rest of the Balkans, and I intend to work with the Congress to provide needed assistance. Other life-saving peace efforts, such as those in Sierra Leone and East Timor, are imperiled by the bill's inadequate funding of the voluntary peacekeeping account.

My Administration has sought to protect Americans from the threat posed by the potential danger of weapons proliferation from Russia and the countries of the former Soviet Union. But the Congress has failed to finance the Expanded Threat Reduction Initiative (ETRI), which is designed to prevent weapons of mass destruction and weapons technologies from fall-

ing into the wrong hands and weapons scientists from offering their talents to countries, or even terrorists, seeking these weapons. The bill also curtails ETRI programs that help Russia and other New Independent States strengthen export controls to avoid illicit trafficking in sensitive materials through their borders and airports. The ETRI will also help facilitate withdrawal of Russian forces and equipment from countries such as Georgia and Moldova; it will create peaceful research opportunities for thousands of former Soviet weapons scientists. We also cannot afford to underfund programs that support democracy and small scale enterprises in Russia and other New Independent States because these are the very kinds of initiatives needed to complete their transformation away from communism and authoritarianism.

A generation from now, no one is going to say we did too much to help the nations of the former Soviet Union safeguard their nuclear technology and expertise. If the funding cuts in this bill were to become law, future generations would certainly say we did too little and that we imperiled our future in the process.

My Administration has also sought to promote economic progress and political change in developing countries, because America benefits when these countries become our partners in security and trade. At the Cologne Summit, we led a historic effort to enable the world's poorest and most heavily indebted countries to finance health, education, and opportunity programs. The Congress fails to fund the U.S. contribution. The bill also severely underfunds Multilateral Development Banks, providing the lowest level of financing since 1987, with cuts of 37 percent from our request. This will virtually double U.S. arrears to these banks and seriously undermine our capacity to promote economic reform and growth in Latin America, Asia, and especially Africa. These markets are critical to American jobs and opportunities.

Across the board, my Administration requested the funding necessary to assure American leadership on matters vital to the interests and values of our citizens. In area after area, from fighting terrorism and international crime to promoting nuclear stability on the Korean peninsula, from helping refugees and disaster victims to meeting its own goal of a 10,000-member Peace Corps, the Congress has failed to fund adequately these requests.

Several policy matters addressed in the bill are also problematic. One provision would hamper the Export-Import Bank's ability to be responsive to American exporters by requiring that the Congress be notified of dozens of additional kinds of transactions before the Bank can offer financing. Another provision would allow the Export-Import Bank to operate without a quorum until March 2000. I have nominated two individuals to the Bank's Board, and they should be confirmed.

A third provision could be read to prevent the United States from engaging in diplomatic efforts to promote a cost-effective, global solution to climate change. A fourth provision places restrictions on assistance to Indonesia that could harm our ability to influence the objectives we share with the Congress: ensuring that Indonesia honors the referendum in East Timor and that security is restored there, while encouraging democracy and economic reform in Indonesia. Finally, this bill contains several sections that, if treated as mandatory, would encroach on the President's sole constitutional authority to conduct diplomatic negotiations.

In sum, this appropriations bill undermines important American interests and ignores the lessons that have been at the core of our bipartisan foreign policy for the last half century. Like the Senate's recent vote to defeat the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, this bill reflects an inexcusable and potentially dangerous complacency about the opportunities and risks America faces in the world today. I therefore am returning this bill without my approval.

I look forward to working with the Congress to craft an appropriations bill that I can support, one that maintains our commitment to protecting the Social Security surplus, properly addressing our shared goal of an America that is strong at home and strong abroad, respected not only for our leadership, but for the vision and commitment that real leadership entails. The American people deserve a foreign policy worthy of our great country, and I will fight to ensure that they continue to have one.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
October 18, 1999.

Message to the Congress Transmitting the Report of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission

October 18, 1999

To the Congress of the United States:

As required by section 307(c) of the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974 (42 U.S.C. 5877(c)), I transmit herewith the Annual Report of the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission,

which covers activities that occurred in fiscal year 1998.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
October 18, 1999.

Remarks on Assistance for Areas Affected by Hurricane Floyd and an Exchange With Reporters in Newark, New Jersey

October 18, 1999

The President. I want to begin my visit to New Jersey by announcing several steps our administration is taking, either today or previously over the weekend, to deliver Federal assistance to the citizens in the communities of New Jersey

that were hurt and are recovering from the flood damage caused by Hurricane Floyd. We're doing all we can, and I hope these steps will help.